

SCOTTSDALE - U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today visited the Friendship Village Retirement Community in Tempe to discuss health care and health insurance reform with senior citizens and retirees in Arizona's Fifth Congressional District.

"Visits like this one provide me an opportunity to constructively listen to the thoughts, concerns and opinions of constituents and to answer their questions about the proposals in Congress," Mitchell said. "Many are concerned about Medicare, and as someone who is over 65 years old and depends on Medicare myself, I can certainly relate. I believe we need to strengthen Medicare and make sure that any health insurance reform does not reduce services or diminish quality."

Mitchell has called on both sides of the health insurance reform debate to focus on issues on which there is agreement, such as allowing people to keep their coverage if they lose or change their job or if they move to a different state, as well as ending the practice of denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions.

"The federal government should not take over the entire health care system," Mitchell added. "If you like your current insurance you should be able to keep it. Reform should provide more choice, not less."

Mitchell believes reform is important to our economy because rising health care costs are hurting families and businesses and putting employees at risk.

Currently, insurance premiums are rising, in part, due to the costs associated with millions of Americans who lack coverage. When the uninsured end up in emergency rooms, hospitals are forced to charge more to those who have insurance to help pay for it. The average American family is paying an extra \$1,100 in premiums a year to pay for the shifted cost.

Mitchell recently held three telephone town halls, during which he spoke with nearly 30,000 constituents and hear their concerns about health insurance reform.